DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 024 056 24 CG 002 312

By-Hawkes, Thomas H.; Koff, Robert H.

Personality Correlates of Sociometric Status.

Stanford Univ., Calif. Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching.
Spons Agency-Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Research.
Bureau No-BR-5-0252
Pub Date May 68
Contract-OEC-6-10-078
Note-19p.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.05
Descriptors-Elementary School Students, *Emotional Adjustment, *Emotional Maladjustment, *Social Status, *Sociometric Techniques, Student Adjustment

An emotional adjustment battery and a two-question sociometric questionnaire were administered to two self-contained elementary school classrooms (N=45). Subjects (Ss) were classified as adjusted or maladjusted according to emotional adjustment battery scores. Adjusted groups were found to have (1) significantly higher positive sociometric status, and (2) significantly lower negative sociometric status than maladjusted groups. No significant differences were found between adjusted and maladjusted groups on indices of intrapersonal maladjustment. Findings were discussed in terms of a taxonomic conception of emotional handicaps and the ways information obtained from sociometric questionnaires might be applied to life in classrooms. (Author)

BR-5-0252
PA-24

EDO 24056

STANFORD CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN TEACHING

Research Memorandum #21

Personality Correlates of Sociometric Status

by

Thomas H. Hawkes
InterAmerican Educational Center

Robert H. Koff
Stanford University

This memorandum is automatically superseded upon formal publication of the material. The research and development reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract with the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, under the provisions of the Cooperative Research Program.

School of Education
Stanford University
Stanford, California

May 1968

CG 002 312

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

Two self-contained elementary school classrooms (N=45) were administered an emotional adjustment battery and a two-question sociometric questionnaire. Ss were classified as adjusted or maladjusted according to emotional adjustment battery scores. Adjusted groups were found to have (a) significantly higher positive sociometric status and (b) significantly lower negative sociometric status than maladjusted groups. No significant differences were found between adjusted and maladjusted groups on indices of intrapersonal maladjustment. Findings were discussed in terms of a taxonomic conception of emotional handicaps and ways information obtained from sociometric questionnaires might be applied to life in classrooms.

Personality Correlates of Sociometric Status[1]

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Thomas H. Hawkes
Inter-American Educational Center

Robert H. Koff
Stanford University

Recent educational research has shown that mental health and sociometric status are positively related. Grounland (1959) and Schmuck (1964) in separate reviews of the literature concluded that there is a positive correlation between assessed mental health and sociometric status. Persons with high positive sociometric status, highly chosen persons, are more likely to be "adjusted" than persons with low sociometric status, unchosen persons. The purpose of the present study is to attempt to show that the relationship between sociometric status and mental health depends upon the "type" of maladjustment. The starting point for the present inquiry is found in the definition of maladjustment developed by Jahoda (1956) and operationalized in instruments developed by Bower and Lambert (1958).

Jahoda posits three characteristics of mental health:

(a) workable active adjustment to social conditions and the environment, including the freedom to modify conditions when necessary; (b) a consistent (conflict-free) inner regulation of behavior relatively free from inner conflicts; and (c) correctness of perception of self and others. Jahoda's definition takes into account behavioral maladjustment characterized by such behaviors as: (a) intemperate acting out of hostile, aggressive impulses toward others; (b) excessive withdrawal from interpersonal relationships or contacts with reality; and (c) the engulfing of others in overly dependent or symbiotic relationships.

Horney (1937), would classify these behaviors as: (a) excessive movement against others; (b) excessive movement away from others; (c) excessive movement toward others. These "types" of behavioral disorders interfere with effective interpersonal relationships whether in the family or at school. These disorders may be regarded as signs of <u>interpersonal maladjustment.</u>

Another type of maladjustment included in Jahoda's definition is accompanied by a generalized anxiety which is a reflection of <u>intrapersonal</u> conflict. Intrapersonal conflict may or may not be congruent with behavioral <u>interpersonal</u> maladjustment. For example, every teacher is aware

of the student who deprecates his successes or of the student who seems to live in perpetual fear of failure, regardless of his many past achievements. These students are usually viewed as being "adjusted" in terms of any kind of interpersonal criterion, but they view themselves as failures. Such students often are thought to have low self esteem (Sears and Sherman, 1964). Although low self esteem may coincide with interpersonal maladjustment, there are many instances when it does not. The present study seeks to show: (a) that there is a significant relationship between sociometric status and interpersonal maladjustment, but (b) that there is little relationship between sociometric status and intrapersonal maladjustment except in extreme cases when intrapersonal and interpersonal maladjustment occur together.

Method

Description of Instruments:

The maladjustment assessment instruments consisted of a sociometric questionnaire and a screening battery developed by Bower and Lambert (1962). The Bower and Lambert screening battery is divided into three instruments, each having several subsections. The first questionnaire is entitled "A Class Play," and it has two subsections. The first section consists of twenty role descriptions presented in a "guess-who" format. Each member of the class is directed to select the classmate he thinks best fits a given role description. Ten of the twenty roles are assigned a negative weight; they depict various inadequacies in interpersonal relationships. Some examples of negative roles are: "a mean, cruel boss," "somebody who is often afraid and who acts like a little boy or girl," and "a bully who picks on smaller boys and girls." Ten of the roles are assigned a positive weight. Some examples of positive roles are: "a class president," "someone who is jolly and doesn't cause any trouble in class," and "a very fair person who plays games fairly." A maladjustment score is computed by finding the per cent of the total mentions a person receives that are negative roles.

The second section of the questionnaire asks the student to select: (a) roles he would like to play, (b) roles he thinks his teacher would pick him to play, and (c) roles his peers would choose him to play. A selected negative role maladjustment score is derived by computing what per cent

of the total roles selected are negative roles. Thus the first section of the instrument is a "guess-who" measure of behavioral maladjustment as perceived by other students. The second section (negative roles selected) is a self-perception questionnaire which may or may not reflect actual behavior.

The second questionnaire elicits further self-perception, and is entitled "Thinking About Yourself." It has two sub-sections: (a) the student is presented with 40 descriptions of other students engaged in common place activities and is asked whether he would like or not like to be the person described; (b) the student is presented with the same 40 behavioral descriptions, but is asked whether he is or is not like the person described. A maladjustment score is derived from the number of discrepancies between selections made in section "a" with selections made in section "b".

The third part of the assessment battery is completed by the teacher. In this questionnaire the teacher is asked to make a Q-sort distribution of students from "most like" to "least like" with respect to eight maladaptive behaviors. Examples of the Q-sort dimensions are: "This pupil has difficulty in learning school subjects," "This pupil is unhappy or depressed..," and "This pupil makes unusual or inappropriate responses during normal school activities." An index of maladaptation for each student is obtained by summing the student's score obtained from each of the eight Q-sort questions.

Thus, there are four measures of maladjustment derived from the Bower and Lambert screening battery. These are: (1) a "guess-who" (GW) score; (2) a teacher maladjustment rating (TRM); (3) a "thinking about yourself" score (TAY), and (4) negative roles selected score (NRS). The "guess who" and teachers' ratings are focused on overt behavior perceived by others, i.e., in interpersonal situations. Students who act out or who are in some way disruptive in class are most likely to be selected with these measures. The negative roles selected score and the thinking about yourself score are both self-perceptual; they reflect intrapersonal anxiety or conflict.

For the purpose of the present study a fifth composite score was also computed. It combined all the measures of maladjustment described above. The purpose of this composite score was to compose groups which were

concommitantly high on interpersonal and intrapersonal maladjustment.

In addition to the Bower and Lambert Screening Battery, each student was also asked to complete a sociometric questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two questions: (1) "Who are your three best friends?; and (2) "Who are three people you do not get along with?" From these questions two scores were computed for each subject: one of positive sociometric status (PS) and one of negative sociometric status (NS). A positive sociometric status score was derived from question one. Three points were given for each first choice received, two points for each second choice received, and one point for each third choice received. A negative sociometric status score was derived from question two. Three points were given for a first rejection choice received, two points for a second rejection choice received, and one point for a third rejection choice received.

Subjects and Hypotheses:

One fifth grade (n=25) and one sixth grade (n=20) from a midwestern private school were selected for study. The fifth grade class was a self-contained classroom; students and teacher remained in the same classroom for the entire day. The sixth grade class was a 'floating' class; students moved as a unit from room to room and from teacher to teacher as required by the curriculum.

On two succeeding days the Bower and Lambert Screening Battery and the sociometric questionnaires were administered to the classes. The students in both of the classes were ranked on each of the five maladjustment (Bower & Lambert) scales. The extremes in each class, the top five ranked Ss (maladjusted) and the bottom five ranked Ss (adjusted), were compared on the four measures of sociometric status by means of a one tailed t-test of the means.

It was hypothesized that there would be significant differences on each measure of sociometric status between adjusted and maladjusted groups as determined by the behavioral interpersonal maladjustment scales (Guess-who, teacher's rating, and total maladjustment scores). As judged by these three scores, it was expected that adjusted groups would have significantly higher positive sociometric status, and significantly lower negative sociometric status than the maladjusted groups. It was further hypothesized that

there would be no significant differences on measures of sociometric status between adjusted and maladjusted groups (as determined by the two intrapersonal self-perceptual scores: thinking about yourself and negative roles selected. Table 1 shows the hypothesized relationships between sociometric status and types of maladjustment.

Insert Table 1 about here

Each hypothesis in Table 1 was tested twice, once in the 5th and once in the 6th grade. There were 10 hypotheses to be tested for each class or a total of twenty hypotheses was tested. Twelve were directional hypotheses ($A < M$, $A > M$) of the general form: sociometric status and behavioral (interpersonal) adjustment are directly related. Eight were null hypotheses ($A = M$) of the general form: sociometric status and self-perceptual (intrapersonal) adjustment are not related. Table 1 may be read as follows: wherever the symbol ($<$) appears we expected a significant difference to occur in favor of the adjusted g oups. For example, in the cell where Positive Sociometric Status and Guess Who Maladjustment intersect it was expected that the adjusted groups would be significantly higher on positive sociometric status than the maladjusted groups. Where the symbol ($>$) appears a significant difference was expected to occur in favor of the maladjusted groups. For example, in the cell where Negative Sociometric Status and Guess Who Maladjustment intersect the maladjusted groups was expected to be significantly higher on negative sociometric status than the adjusted groups. Where the symbol ($=$) occurs it was not expected that the differences would be significant between the groups.

Results:

Table 2 shows t-test comparisons on the two sociometric scores earned by the five fifth and sixth grade adjusted and maladjusted groups as determined by the five indices of maladjustment.

Insert Table 2 about here

Table II shows that 6 out of 12 directional (interpersonal, behavioral) hypotheses were supported at the .05 level. If one is concerned with only directionality of the sign of the t-statistic, the hypotheses were supported 12 out of 12 times.

The 8 null hypotheses (self-perceptual, intrapersonal) stated that adjusted and maladjusted groups would not be significantly different on any of the two measures of sociometric status. In the 8 tests of these

hypotheses it was found that not one of the t tests approached significance at the .05 level. It is interesting to note that the sign of the t-value is in the appropriate direction on only 5 of these 8 null hypotheses tests. These findings support the premise that sociometric status is related to mental health only insofar as adjustment lies within the area of interpersonal relationships or in the extreme cases where interpersonal and intrapersonal maladjustment coincide.

Further support for these findings may be found in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 shows for the fifth and sixth grade classes how the seven most maladjusted and the seven most adjusted students, as determined by the school psychologist, fared on the maladjustment scales. Each student was ranked on each of the maladjustment measures; the top seven ranked students were considered maladjusted on the particular scale. The psychologist, prior to the ranking procedures, conducted intensive personal interviews with each of the students in the two classes.

Insert Table 3 about here

The data in Table 3 show that the psychologist's rankings of maladjustment were verified by the Screening Battery. Significant differences were found for both classes; maladjusted groups were significantly ($p < .01$) different from adjusted groups (Johnson, 1949). These findings serve as a form of concurrent validity for the assessment instruments employed in the study.

Table 3 also shows that all indicators of maladjustment were not to be found in the maladjusted groups. That is, in both the fifth and sixth grade, each of the measures of maladjustment was represented at least once in the adjusted groups. Most striking in this respect was "Thinking About Yourself" maladjustment. These rankings were fairly evenly divided among adjusted and maladjusted students. The most adjusted student, as ranked by the counselor in the sixth grade, had the largest discrepancy on the TAY score. When the two classes are combined there are five adjusted students who have high TAY scores.

With but one exception TRM, TM and GWM seemed to be most congruent of the Bowers and Lambert scales with the psychologist's rankings. NRS and TAY (self-perception scores) were the most erratic and most likely to be

represented in the healthier groups. These findings tend to support the thesis that intrapersonal maladjustment has a tendency to be overlooked in favor of interpersonal maladjustment.

In Table 3 it is interesting to note the relationships between high positive and negative sociometric status and the measures of maladjustment. Positive sociometric status does not seem to be related to adjustment or maladjustment in either class. The majority of the high ranking positive sociometric scores occur in the middle ranks of adjustment.

Table 4 shows a tabulation of the number of times PS and NS occur with each of the measures of maladjustment in the fifth and sixth grades.

Insert Table 4 about here

The figure in the upper right hand corner cell indicates that Negative Sociometric Status was associated two times with TAY maladjustment in the sixth grade. Viewing the table as a whole, it is interesting to note that signs of maladjustment are more likely to occur with negative sociometric status than with positive sociometric status.

However, looking at the types of maladjustment one can see certain trends which support the hypothesized relationship between sociometric status and type of maladjustment. GWM (a measure of interpersonal maladjustment) and TM (a measure of interpersonal maladjustment which coincides with intra personal maladjustment) is not as often associated with positive status as are NRS and TAY (measures of intrapersonal maladjustment). This is in accordance with the hypothesis that interpersonal maladjustment would not be associated with high sociometric status, whereas intrapersonal maladjustment is as likely as not to be associated with high positive sociometric status. The above relationship is, in accordance with theory, reversed when these measures are compared on negative sociometric status.

The finding in Table 4 and in Table 2 which is not consistent with theory is related to TRM (teacher's ratings of maladjustment). TRM was viewed as a measure of primarily interpersonal maladjustment. It was expected that groups distinguished on the basis of TRM scores would be significantly different on measures of sociometric status. In Table 2 only one of the t-tests comparing the adjusted and maladjusted groups as distinguished by TRM was significant at the .05 level. In Table 4 the TRM

ratings did not follow the trend mentioned above with regard to GWM and TM, the other measures of interpersonal maladjustment.

One plausible explanation for these findings might be that, either because of the nature of the instrument or because of their own previous training, the teachers were forced to make a judgment of maladjustment which spans the theorized dichotomy of "inter" vs. "intra" personal maladjustment. If this were the case the teacher's ratings ought to be a good concurrent measure of maladjustment but not necessarily related to sociometric status. Support is found for this explanation in Table 3 where TRM is found to be second only to TM for distinguishing maladjusted and adjusted as rated by the school psychologist.

In summary, it has been shown that sociometric status is related only to certain kinds of maladjustment--behavioral, interpersonal, and not to other kinds of maladjustment--self-perceptual, intrapersonal conflict. This finding was supported by the differences found between adjusted-maladjusted groups, as determined by the measures employed by the Bower and Lambert Screening Battery, and the relationships found between different scores of maladjustment and sociometric status.

Discussion:

The findings of this study shed light onto the question of what is actually measured by a sociometric questionnaire. The case has been made that the sociometric questionnaire is not just a measure of desired or real relationships within a group, but more importantly might be an indicator of personal problems in interpersonal relationships.

This study tested the common assumption that persons chosen a great many times on a sociometric questionnaire would be in better mental health than those who were chosen a few times or not at all. It was found that this assumption holds true for only certain types of maladjustment. For example, several subjects with high sociometric status were not mentioned on any of the peer perception measures of interpersonal maladjustment, but showed signs of intrapersonal conflict on other measures. One student, who was rated as adjusted by the school psychologist and had high sociometric status also had the highest discrepancy score on the "thinking about yourself" questionnaire.

The sociometric as a device for obtaining information about group structure has been employed in groups and in the classroom for years. Teachers and group leaders might now view data obtained from sociometrics as additional information in trying to help the maladjusted student. Such information gives the counselor, the psychologist and the teacher a common reference point for beginning to help a maladjusted student with interpersonal problems.

The findings of this study suggest several important implications for future research and practices. First, sociometric status does not seem to be an effective measure of intrapersonal behavior. That is, other people, even when they have had a chance to observe an individual for a prolonged period of time may not be able to give a realistic picture of that particular individual's intrapersonal problems.

Secondly, the taxonomy of maladjustment outlined in this report cuts across dimensions of interpersonal ineffectiveness and intrapersonal anxiety. Such a taxonomy, in turn, suggests differential types of ameliorative strategies in the classroom as well as in the home. For instance, in constructing small groups as adaptive milieu for problem solving or rehabilitation one might compose such groups differentially on the basis of the type of maladjustment: for example, students who have behavioral problems with concomitant intrapersonal conflict or anxiety, or students who do not have behavior problems, but who have negative self-concepts, and the students who are behavioral problems and who also show concomitant anxiety about it.

It would seem that we are now in the position to inquire into the effects that positive and negative sociometricstatus has on interpersonal dynamics in the classroom. How does positive and negative sociometric status vary as a function of task? How might the teacher be trained to better diagnose and evaluate the social system of which she is a vital participant? Why do some students feel conflicted or dissatisfied with themselves when they are thought to be doing so well by their peers and teacher? How can we better identify and help these students?

Table 1

Hypothesized Relationships Between Sociometric Status
and
Types of Maladjustment

	GWM*	TM	TAY	NRS	TRM
Positive Sociometric Status	A<M	A<M	A=M	A=M	A<M
Negative Sociometric Status	A>M	A>M	A=M	A=M	A>M

*GWM Guess Who Maladjustment
TM Total Maladjustment
TAY Thinking About Yourself
NRS Negative Roles Selcted
TRM Teachers Rating of Maladjustment
M Maladjusted Group
A Adjusted Group

Table 2

t-test Analyses Between Type of Maladjustment and Sociometric Status for Fifth (N=25) and Sixth Grade (N=20)Classes

	Guess-Who Maladjusted Score			
	Sixth Grade		Fifth Grade	
Positive Sociometric Status	Adjusted (N=5)	Maladjusted (N=5)	Adjusted (N=5)	Maladjusted (N=5)
Mean	7.60	4.20	6.20	2.00
S.D.	1.62	2.71	2.13	1.78
t-value	2.15*		3.01*	
Negative Sociometric Status				
Mean	1.40	4.60	.20	17.00
S.D.	.80	4.71	.40	2.82
t-value	-1.33		-11.76*	

	Teacher's Rating of Maladjustment			
	Sixth Grade		Fifth Grade	
Positive Sociometric Status	Adjusted (N=5)	Maladjusted (N=5)	Adjusted (N=5)	Maladjusted (N=5)
Mean	7.60	4.40	7.00	5.30
S.D.	1.49	3.00	3.34	3.76
t-value	1.90*		.47	
Negative Sociometric Status				
Mean	4.00	5.20	.00	3.40
S.D.	5.05	5.15	.00	4.56
t-value	-.33		-1.55	

Table 2 (cont.)

Total Maladjusted Score

	Sixth Grade		Fifth Grade	
Positive Sociometric Status	Adjusted (N=5)	Maladjusted (N=5)	Adjusted (N=5)	Maladjusted (N=5)
Mean	7.80	3.30	8.60	3.00
S.D.	1.72	2.27	5.91	1.67
t-value	2.84*		1.82	
Negative Sociometric Status				
Mean	1.40	5.20	1.40	11.60
S.D.	1.20	5.15	2.33	3.40
t-value	-1.43		-2.33*	

Thinking About Yourself Discrepancy

	Sixth Grade		Fifth Grade	
Positive Sociometric Status	Adjusted (N=5)	Maladjusted (N=5)	Adjusted (N=5)	Maladjusted (N=5)
Mean	6.20	5.20	6.00	4.60
S.D.	2.78	1.72	2.36	4.02
t-value	.61		.59	
Negative Sociometric Status				
Mean	3.40	4.20	6.20	5.00
S.D.	3.44	2.71	7.38	5.93
t-value	-.36		.25	

Negative Roles Selected

	Sixth Grade		Fifth Grade	
Positive Sociometric Status	Adjusted (N=5)	Maladjusted (N=5)	Adjusted (N=5)	Maladjusted (N=5)
Mean	5.20	6.60	5.40	5.00
S.D.	3.65	2.05	3.26	3.16
t-value	-.66		.17	
Negative Sociometric Status				
Mean	4.80	1.40	3.00	5.80
S.D.	5.28	1.20	4.56	6.27
t-value	1.25		-.72	

* ($p < .05$)

Table 3

Comparisons Between Psychologist Rankings of Maladjusted And Adjusted Fifth and Sixth Grade Students and Measures of Interpersonal Maladjustment on Positive and Negative Sociometric Status

	TRM*	GWM	TM	NRS	TAY	PS	NS
Maladjusted (N=7)	4	4	6	5	3	2	2
6th Grade (N=20)							
Adjusted (N=7)	0	2	0	1	2	1	3
Maladjusted (N=7)	4	4	4	3	4	0	4
5th Grade (N=25)							
Adjusted (N=7)	1	1	1	2	3	1	0
Maladjusted (N=14)	8	8	10	8	7	2	6
Total (N=45)							
Adjusted (N=14)	1	3	1	3	5	2	3

*TRM Teacher's Rating of Maladjustment
TM Total Maladjustment
GWM Guess Who Maladjustment
NRS Negative Roles Selected
TAY Thinking About Yourself
PS Positive Sociometric Status
NS Negative Sociometric Status

Table 4

Coincidence of Top Ranks of Maladjustment and Top Ranks of Positive and Negative Sociometric Status

		TRM*	GWM	TM	NRS	TAY
6th Grade (N=20)	Negative Sociometric Status	2	5	5	3	2
	Positive Sociometric Status	0	0	0	1	1
5th Grade (N=25)	Negative Sociometric Status	2	2	2	2	2
	Positive Sociometric Status	2	1	1	3	3
Total (N=45)	Negative Sociometric Status	4	7	7	5	4
	Positive Sociometric Status	2	1	1	4	4

*Teacher's Rules of Maladjustment
Guess Who Maladjustment
Total Maladjustment
Negative Roles Selected
Thinking About Yourself

Footnotes

1. This study was supported by Research Grant USPHS 1-R11-M-H-02010 from the National Institute of Mental Health of the United States Public Health Service to Professor Herbert A. Thelen, Department of Education, The University of Chicago. The study is based on data the authors collected and analyzed while at the University of Chicago. The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of Professor Thelen and express their thanks to Miss Marilyn Waage and Miss Jean Lawrence, teachers, and Mrs. Richard Strattner, psychologist, The University of Chicago Laboratory School.

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TITLE

100 Personality Correlates of Sociometric Status

101 JUL 2 1968

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103

PERSONAL AUTHOR(S)

200 Hawkes, .Thomas H., & Koff, Robert H.

INSTITUTION (SOURCE) Stanford University — SOURCE CODE

300 Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching

310 REPORT/SERIES NO. Research Memorandum #21

OTHER SOURCE — SOURCE CODE

320

330 OTHER REPORT NO.

OTHER SOURCE — SOURCE CODE

340

350 OTHER REPORT NO.

400 PUB'L. DATE 5 — — 68 | CONTRACT/GRANT NUMBER OE-6-10-078

PAGINATION, ETC.

500 15 p.

501

RETRIEVAL TERMS

600 Intrapersonal maladjustment
601 Interpersonal maladjustment
602 positive sociometric status
603 negative sociometric status
604 emotional handicaps
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IDENTIFIERS

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ABSTRACT

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